
Transportation Committee

HB 1717

Brief Description: Extending the time period for the department of transportation to enter into an agreement for a rail line over the Milwaukee Road corridor.

Sponsors: Representatives Clibborn, Armstrong, Wood, Warnick and Klippert.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the deadline for the Department of Transportation to enter into a franchise agreement with a rail carrier to operate service over the line from Ellensburg to Lind to July 1, 2019.

Hearing Date: 2/10/09

Staff: Teresa Berntsen (786-7301)

Background:

In 1980, the Milwaukee Road railroad declared bankruptcy, sold some of its properties, and salvaged its track. In 1981, the Legislature appropriated \$3.5 million to purchase 213 miles of the railroad's right-of-way in eastern Washington.

The right-of-way owned by the state was eventually put under the management and control of three state agencies: the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Transportation (DOT).

During the 1995 legislative interim, the Legislative Transportation Committee convened a Freight Rail and Freight Mobility Task Force to examine the Milwaukee Road corridor's potential for relieving freight congestion. The task force recommended resuming freight rail service over the portion of the former Milwaukee Road railroad running from Ellensburg to Lind.

Legislation in 1996 consolidated state-owned portions of the former Milwaukee Road railroad

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from Ellensburg to Lind into a single owner, the DOT. The DOT was charged with management and control of this corridor, and was authorized to negotiate a franchise agreement with a qualified rail carrier to operate service over the line.

The legislation creating the consolidated transportation corridor was to sunset if the DOT did not enter into a franchise agreement by July 1, 1999. Management of the trail between Ellensburg and Lind would revert back to the three state agencies. In 1999, the Legislature extended the deadline for the DOT to enter into a franchise agreement to July 1, 2006. In 2006, the Legislature extended the deadline to July 1, 2009.

Summary of Bill:

The deadline for the DOT to enter into a franchise agreement with a qualified rail carrier to operate service over the line from Ellensburg to Lind is extended to July 1, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 2009.